REMARKS

The present Amendment amends claims 1-8 and 10-23 and leaves claim 9 unchanged. Therefore, the present application has pending claims 1-23.

Claims 1-3, 6-9, 10-15, 16-18 and 21-23 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Hatakeyama (U.S. Patent No. 5,454,105); and claims 4, 5, 9, 19 and 20 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hatakeyama in view of Berson (U.S. Patent No. 6,532,459). These rejections are traversed for the following reasons. Applicants submit that the features of the present invention as now more clearly recited in claims 1-23 are not taught or suggested by Hatakeyama or Berson whether taken individually or in combination with each other as suggested by the Examiner. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw these rejections.

Amendments were made to each of the claims so as to more clearly describe features of the present invention. Particularly, amendments were made to the claims so as to more clearly recite that the present invention is directed to a document search system, a search server for mediating between a search client and a plurality of document databases and a document search method for instructing a document search.

According to the present invention, an associate server is provided which is capable of instructing a document search by specifying a document database j to be searched next among a plurality of document databases based on a search result generated from a previous search of a document database i. Further, according to the present invention, an associate search recording table is provided which records

the number of times x_{ij} of searching the document database j based on the search results generated from the previous searches of the document database i.

Thus, as per the features of the present invention, for example, as described in the passage of the present application beginning on page 8, line 32 through page 10, line 10 the associate search recording table which stores therein information for tracking the number of times of searching a second database based on the search results generated from the previously conducted search of a first database. Therefore, the present invention is intended to address a situation wherein the order of document databases to be searched next is determined using the tracking information stored in the associative search recording table regarding searches conducted in proceeding databases that are searched prior to searching the next database.

For example, according to the present invention a search for a particular type of document is set using a keyword and the search is conducted in a first database which retrieves documents related to the keyword. Thereafter the documents retrieved are used to search a second database with good results. Then the associative search recording table records (tracking) information so as to indicate the number of searches that are performed using the first database and then the second database. According to the present invention such tracking information being stored in the associative search recording table is used by an associative server when conducting a search to specify the next database within which a search is to be performed. This tracking information stored in the associative search recording table not only improves the results of the searching operation relative to conventional

systems. This feature of the present invention also allows for the appropriate calculation of fees fro the use of the databases where certain databases are more useful in searching when combined with other databases. All of the above described features of the present invention are not taught or suggested by Hatakeyama and Berson whether taken individually or in combination with each other.

Hatakeyama teaches a document information search method and system that reduces the wait time in the event that a plurality of search requests are sent to a search device simultaneously by executing the multiple search requests simultaneously, namely in parallel. The table as taught by Hatakeyama is a correspondence table indicating which database is stored in which server and which document has been hit by which search word. Thus, there is absolutely no teaching or suggestion in Hatakeyama of the associative search recording table as recited in the claims wherein tracking information is stored indicating the number of times of searching a second database based on the search results generated from the previous searches of a first database and wherein the tracking information is used for selecting the next database within which to perform a search after searching in a preceding database as in the present invention.

Thus, the table illustrated in Fig. 4 of Hatakeyama is simply a table for recording which documents have been hit by which keyword. Therefore, this table as table as taught by Hatakeyama does not anticipate nor render obvious the features of the present invention as now more clearly recited in the claims regarding the associative search recording table.

Further, in Hatakeyama col. 19, lines 47-60 simply teaches the above described correspondence table which indicates which database is located in which server. Thus, this teaching of Hatakeyama does not anticipate nor render obvious the features of the present invention as recited in the claims regarding the associative search recording table.

Still further, Hatakeyama teaches in col. 17, lines 40-55 that a hierarchical search wherein a beginning search is subsequently refined so as to conduct sub-searches. This teaching of Hatakeyama does not anticipate nor render obvious the features of the present invention as recited in the claims wherein the associative search recording table is provided. According to the present invention, the associative search recording table is provided so as to allow for the associative server to select which of the document databases are to be searched next due to the results of searching generated from the previous searches of the document databases.

Hatakeyama also teaches in col. 2, lines 62-67 and in col. 3, lines 1-10 a method of processing a plurality of search requests at once by putting the search request in a queue. However, as is quite clear from the above, the present invention is not directed to organizing search requests in a queue but is instead directed to setting the order in which databases are to be searched based upon tracking information as to how the databases are used as a result of previously performed searches. Such features are clearly not taught or suggested by Hatakeyama.

Thus, Hatakeyama fails to teach or suggest an associative server which is capable of instructing a document search by specifying a document database j to be

searched next among a plurality of databases based on a search result generated from a previous search of a document database i as recited in the claims.

Further, Hatakeyama fails to teach or suggest an associative search recording table which records the number of times x_{ij} of searching the document database j based on the search results generated from the previous search of the document database i as recited in the claims.

Therefore, Hatakeyama does not teach or suggest the features of the present invention as recited in the claims. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the 35 USC §102(b) rejection of claims 1-3, 6-9, 10-15, 16-18 and 21 as being anticipated by Hatakeyama is respectfully requested.

The above noted deficiencies of Hatakeyama are not supplied by any of the other references of record, namely Berson whether taken individually or in combination with each other. Therefore, combining the teachings of Hatakeyama and Berson in the manner suggested by the Examiner in the Office Action still fails to teach or suggest the features of the present invention as now more clearly recited in the claims.

Berson simply teaches a system for retrieving, identifying, tracking or correcting personal information of a user contained in external databases on a network. Berson teaches that the system disclosed therein is used for holding the various databases in which the personal information is registered without the user's knowledge and that any information that is retrieved from the database is conducted on a fee basis.

However, at no point is there any teaching or suggestion in Berson of the above described features of the present invention as recited in the claims regarding the associative server and the associative search recording table used by the associative server so as to determine the next database upon which a search is to be conducted. As described above, the associative search recording table records the number of times of searching a second database based on the search results generated from the previously performed searches of a first database. Such features are clearly not taught or suggested by Berson.

Thus, Berson, the same as Hatakeyama, fails to teach or suggest the above described features of the present invention as recited in the claims regarding the associative server and the associative search recording table. Therefore, combining the teachings of Hatakeyama and Berson in the manner suggested by the Examiner in the Office Action still fails to teach or suggest the features of the present invention as now more clearly recited in the claims. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the 35 USC §103(a) rejection of claims 4, 5, 9, 19 and 20 as being unpatentable over Hatakeyama in view of Berson is respectfully requested.

The remaining references of record have been studied. Applicants submit that they do not supply any of the deficiencies noted above with respect to the references utilized in the rejection of claims 1-23.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, applicants submit that claims 1-23 are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, early allowance of claims 1-23 is respectfully requested.

To the extent necessary, the applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, or credit any overpayment of fees, to the deposit account of MATTINGLY, STANGER, MALUR & BRUNDIDGE, P.C., Deposit Account No. 50-1417 (1021.40599X00).

Respectfully submitted,

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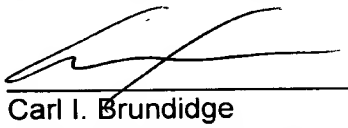

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